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ABSTRACT

A three-step process for developing a program to help youth learn independent living skills is described. The steps are: (1) identifying and ranking specific skills; (2) developing curriculum packages; and (3) involving adults from the local community to help teach those skills to youth. A list of 20 independent living skills is offered along with a recommendation to consider other skills which may be important to individual communities. Strategies for choosing from among these skills and for prioritizing them are provided. A guide to developing a survival skills curriculum includes a seven-step process and a sample curriculum. A list of printed resources, available from the Northwest Regional Educational Lab, resource organizations and people (primarily located in the northwestern United States) conclude the document. (DC)

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TEACHING INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS TO YOUTH

IDEAS FOR ACTION IN EDUCATION AND WORK
ISSUE 3: NOVEMBER 1981

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

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Teaching Independent Living Skills to Youth

...using community resources ...at little or no extra cost
...requiring no additional staff or materials

Who Can Use This Ideas for Action?

This issue of IDEAS FOR ACTION is written for programs and agencies that serve youth--particularly those youth who will most acutely feel the effects of:

- Reduced funding for education and training
- Increasing youth unemployment
- Shrinking social services

If your goal is to help youth become self-sufficient and able to use community resources effectively, then this issue is for you.

You might be:

teachers
parole officers
CETA counselors
career coordinators
residential care staff
school counselors
staff in local Y's or other community agencies
job counselors
work experience coordinators
treatment directors

Whatever your role in working with youth, the authors of this IDEAS FOR ACTION hope you can apply some of the recommendations to help your youth gain independent living skills.

Experience: A Valued Teacher

NWREL has helped various agencies develop employability programs for youth in the justice system, migrant youth, teen parents, economically disadvantaged young women, Indochinese young women and youth in CETA and U. S. Forest Service Job Corps Programs. Although each program and each young person has unique needs that must be considered, several issues of common concern have surfaced. These concerns relate to the challenge of helping youth develop the independence and self-sufficiency required for daily survival.

We know that young people learn best how to get along in the real world by experiencing it directly. This conclusion is supported by the enthusiasm that is expressed by youth participating in

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Experience-Based Career Education (EBCE) programs around the country. In these programs youth have opportunities to interact with adults in real work settings, and emphasis is placed on teaching independence in living and in seeking work.

Barriers to Experience and a Suggested Response

It can be difficult to implement experiential learning with youth who have been alienated from the community by their past experiences or special needs or who have been prevented by those needs from acquiring the daily survival skills that other youth learn from continuous positive experiences (at home, in school, with peers and with other significant adults). In some cases youth are considered "not ready" to use the community as a learning resource. In other cases, barriers such as low program funding, understaffing and physical distance may limit a young person's access to adults who can motivate youth to learn. Adults themselves may have negative images of the youth in a particular program, which may deter staff from placing students in the community for learning experiences. Despite such barriers, the need to help youth develop independent living skills is still present.

Staff of the Education and Work Program at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) suggest a process in this IDEAS FOR ACTION for programs to help young people acquire some selected independent living skills. The process focuses on using local community resources in gradual and flexible ways. This process consists of three basic steps:

1. Identifying and rank-ordering the specific independent living skills that are most essential to your youth.

2. Developing your own curriculum packages that contain learning activities to develop those skills.

3. Involving willing adults from the local community to help teach those skills to youth.

Commercial curriculum materials are available, as are consultants, packaged programs and traditional learning materials. Unfortunately, these sources are not always the best options to help disaffected youth gain independent living skills. Each youth-serving program is unique and must continuously identify learning strategies that meet the specific needs of each young person in the program. The methods used must also respond to program variables such as physical environment, geography, funding status and policy. The process described below acknowledges these differences and variations.

What Do We Mean By 'Independent Living Skills'?

The following is a list of 20 independent living skills that recent research and development efforts have found to be most commonly used by programs that serve youth with widely varying special needs. Some of these youth are leaving juvenile justice institutions and returning to their home community; some are graduating from high school and entering college; some are youth who migrate from one region to another to harvest crops and have no consistent educational setting; and some are young women who are just realizing that nine out of ten of them will work 25-30 years and may be the sole support of a family.

This list of independent living skills is neither exhaustive nor in order of priority. It is a synthesis of:

- Adult competencies successfully used in Experience-Based Career Education (EBCE) programs for the last ten years

- Survival skills commonly used in career-related youth programs identified in an extensive review of such programs across the country

- Ideas and techniques identified by NWREL field sites in the Northwest

Although this list is a result of at least ten years of development and reflects as

many years of success with young people, we recommend that you consider it as a guide, not a directive.

TWENTY INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS

- Filing state and federal income taxes
- Maintaining a checking and savings account
- Acquiring adequate insurance
- Budgeting money
- Understanding credit
- Understanding personal legal rights
- Responding to fire, police and health emergencies
- Implementing effective time management
- Participating in the electoral process
- Understanding local government
- Making appropriate use of public agencies
- Operating and maintaining an automobile
- Planning nutritious meals
- Renting an apartment or house
- Making positive use of leisure time
- Being able to use local community resources and transportation systems
- Maintaining good health, including an understanding of sexuality and the effects of alcohol and drug abuse
- Keeping physically fit
- Conserving energy
- Doing simple home repairs

In your community, other skills may also be considered important for adult living.

We encourage you to involve both students and adults in a process of brainstorming possible independent living skills and then prioritizing those skills so you come up with a manageable number for your curriculum and a list that reflects the skills most valued by your local community. The group you choose to involve in this process should be culturally diverse to reflect the background and orientation of youth in your program and also to represent different cultural perspectives in your community.

Prioritizing or rank ordering can help you accomplish the following:

1. Pinpoint those skills regarded as most important.
2. Decide which skills to emphasize first, particularly for those youth who are in your program only for a short period of time.
3. Determine which curriculum materials to develop first.

Youth participation in the process encourages their commitment to the resulting skills curriculum. The greater the participation of your clients, both youth and adult, the more generalizable your list will be. It is critical to remember, however, that each young person brings unique experiences and needs which may require an emphasis on certain skills, regardless of the results of the group's rank ordering process.

Matching Individual Youth With Particular Skills

You may need also to identify which skills individual youth in your program feel are most important and which skills they most need to learn.

Factors which will help determine individual requirements include:

- Skills already acquired by the youth with whom you work
- Level of maturity
- Age

- Cultural background
- Length of time you'll have to work with each individual in your program

Different students, of course, will express different opinions about what is most important to them and each time a new group of young people joins your program, you could repeat the prioritizing process.

A Process for Prioritizing

The following process is suggested as a useful way to have individuals sort through a list of skills to determine their order of importance.

PRIORITIZING GRID

										TOTALS	RANK ORDER
# 1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
# 2		2	2	2	2	2	2	2			
		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
# 3			3	3	3	3	3	3			
			4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
# 4				4	4	4	4	4			
				5	6	7	8	9	10		
# 5					5	5	5	5			
					6	7	8	9	10		
# 6						6	6	6			
						7	8	9	10		
# 7							7	7			
							8	9	10		
# 8								8			
								9	10		
# 9											
									10		
# 10											

The prioritizing grid illustrated above requires you to compare each skill to all the other skills on your list and make choices as to relative importance. The grid can be used by staff, students--anyone participating in the prioritizing process. Here's how it works:

STEP ONE:

List all the skills on the grid (for example, #1 - Organizing Time; #2 - Health and Fitness; #3 - Renting an Apartment).

STEP TWO:

Across from each skill, you'll see rows of numbers on the grid. The number above the line is the number of the skill you're comparing; below the line are the numbers of all the other items on your list. Beginning with skill #1, compare it to #2 and circle the number of the skill you feel is most important. For example, if "organizing time" seems more important than "health and fitness," circle $\frac{(1)}{2}$. Or if "health and fitness" seems more important than "organizing time," circle $\frac{1}{(2)}$.

Then compare skill #1 with #3 and circle whichever of those two numbers you feel is most important. Continue the process until you have compared #1 with all the other skills on your list. Then move down to skill #2 and compare it to all the remaining skills on the list, each time circling the number of the one you feel is most important. Continue down the list until you have compared each skill to all the others.

STEP THREE:

Complete the Totals column on the grid by counting the number of times you have circled each number, both on its own line and on all the items that precede it. Example:

		Totals	Rank Order
1.	Organizing Time	2	2
2.	Health and Fitness	3	1
3.	Renting an Apartment	1	3

In this sample, the total for item #2 was 3 because it was circled twice on its own line and once under item #1. As you work your way down the list, be sure to count all the times a number has been circled on items above it.

STEP FOUR:

Determine priorities by rank ordering the totals scores. The item with the highest total score is priority #1, the next highest is #2 and so forth.

This process is adapted from Where Do I Go From Here With My Life? by John Crystal and Richard N. Bolles. It can appear complicated, but once you try it, you will probably agree that it works and that it is a useful tool in many situations.

We recommend this particular process because it is systematic and allows for thorough comparison of all items on your list. There are alternatives, of course, such as a simple five-point rating scale and individual negotiation with each youth.

How to Create Your Own Survival Skills Curriculum

In tight economic times, few programs can afford to purchase curriculum packages or to hire consultants to assess their students' needs and design appropriate curricula. The following process enables you to develop your own learning packages, tailored to your specific youth and built around your local community resources.

Similar to the rank ordering process described above, this process of curriculum development is best done in a group setting. Ideally, the group will include program staff, students and at least one adult whose expertise is pertinent to the survival skill around which the learning package is being developed.

STEPS TO CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

1. Complete the rank ordering and select one independent living skill with which to start.

   Example:

   Keeping physically fit

2. Assemble your working group.

   Example:

   One teacher, one counselor or treatment director, two youth, one PE instructor from a local college and one YMCA athletic director.

3. Brainstorm a list of all concepts and skills that youth should have in order to demonstrate their competence in this survival skill.

   Example:

   The student can:

   a. Articulate the negative results of neglecting personal physical needs

   b. Design a personal fitness plan and maintain it for a specified period of time

   c. Understand the role of nutrition in physical fitness

   d. Know what community resources are available to a person who wants to maintain a fitness program

4. For each of the concepts or skills you have identified, create an activity (or set of activities) that will help a young person learn the skill. At least some of the activities should require the youth to have personal contact with adults in the community so they begin to use local resources.

   Example:

   To demonstrate understanding of how poor physical fitness is detrimental to personal health, the individual will:

   - Interview a PE teacher at a nearby high school
   - Interview a heart specialist or a professional athlete
   - List three illnesses that current research attributes to poor physical fitness
   - List three personal benefits of being physically fit

5. For each activity you have created, specify names of actual people, places and materials in the community that can serve as resources for youth performing this activity.

   You should also consider collaborating with other community agencies for skill development, wherever appropriate; local Y programs, for example, might provide health instruction for your program.

   Example:

   Don Heller, PSU
   Dr. Jones, Kaiser Hospital
   Prevention Magazine
   Medical school library
   YMCA Fitness Center

   Be sure that you have first gained agreements from resource people to work with your program.

6. Identify products or "outcomes" that will demonstrate the young person's mastery of the skill. Each product and its evaluation should be appropriate to the individual youth's educational and maturity levels. There should be a variety of products such as written reports, discussions, demonstrations and charts.

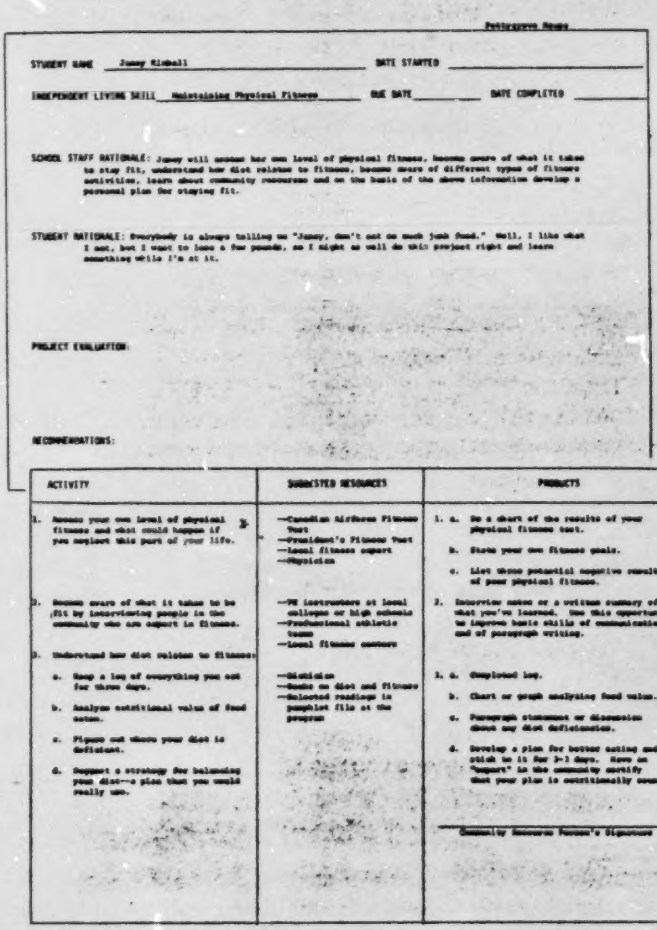
   Example #1: (1) one-paragraph summary of each interview, written in complete sentences; (2) a list of three illnesses; (3) a discussion with a teacher or counselor of three reasons why the youth wants to stay healthy.

   Example #2: (1) complete tape recording of the interviews with a one-page summary of each, highlighting the main points; (2) a list of illnesses, describing their causes, symptoms and remedies; (3) three personal goals for a physical fitness plan.

7. Write these activities, resources and products in a structured format that is easy for a young person to follow and is easy for your staff to monitor. The following pages from a youth project illustrate a structured format that has been used successfully to help youth develop skills for independent living.

SURVIVAL SKILL ACTIVITIES IN PROJECT FORMAT

This is a real example developed by staff and youth at Pettygrove House, a residential treatment center for young women in Portland, Oregon. "Maintaining Physical Fitness" was designated number one in importance by using the described prioritizing process. Because the young women at Pettygrove House are just beginning to learn to use adult resources in their community, this project does not rely heavily on community-based activities. As they become more confident about using community resources, project activities can be redesigned to reinforce these successes and add further challenges (for examples, see the Project Ideabook: Sample Student Projects Using the Community as a Learning Resource, produced by NWREL).



Pettygrove House

STUDENT NAME Jenny Kimball DATE STARTED

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILL Maintaining Physical Fitness DUE DATE DATE COMPLETED

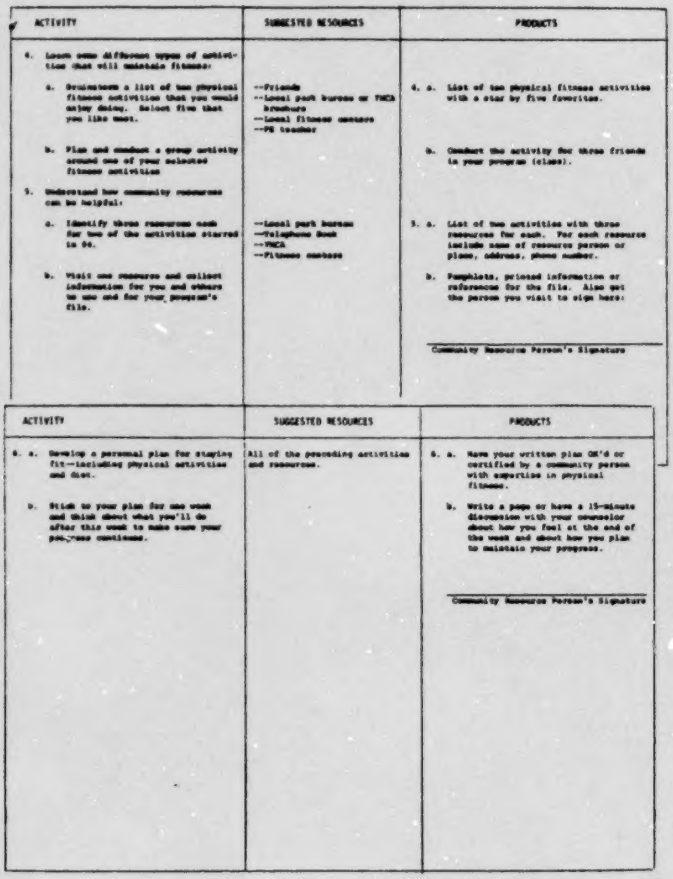
SCHOOL STAFF RATIONALE: Jenny will assess her own level of physical fitness, become aware of what it takes to stay fit, understand how diet relates to fitness, become aware of different types of fitness activities, learn about community resources and on the basis of the above information develop a personal plan for staying fit.

STUDENT RATIONALE: Everybody is always telling me "Jenny, don't eat so much junk food." Well, I like what I eat, but I want to lose a few pounds, so I might as well do this project right and learn something while I'm at it.

PROJECT EVALUATION:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

ACTIVITY	SUGGESTED RESOURCES	PRODUCTS
1. Assess your own level of physical fitness and what could happen if you neglect this part of your life.	—Canadian Airforce Fitness Test —President's Fitness Test —Local fitness expert —Physician	1. a. Be a chart of the results of your physical fitness test. b. State your own fitness goals. c. List three potential negative results of poor physical fitness.
2. Become aware of what it takes to be fit by interviewing people in the community who are expert in fitness.	—PE instructors at local colleges or high schools —Professional athletic teams —Local fitness centers	2. Interview notes or a written summary of what you've learned. Use this opportunity to improve basic skills of communication and of paragraph writing.
3. Understand how diet relates to fitness: a. Keep a log of everything you eat for three days. b. Analyze nutritional value of food eaten. c. Figure out where your diet is deficient. d. Suggest a strategy for balancing your diet—a plan that you would really use.	—Dietician —Books on diet and fitness —Selected readings in pamphlet file at the program	3. a. Completed log. b. Chart or graph analyzing food value. c. Paragraph statement or discussion about any diet deficiencies. d. Develop a plan for better eating and print it in for 2-3 days. Have an "expert" in the community certify that your plan is nutritionally sound. Community Resource Person's Signature



ACTIVITY	SUGGESTED RESOURCES	PRODUCTS
4. Learn some different types of activities that will maintain fitness. a. Brainstorm a list of ten physical fitness activities that you would enjoy doing. Select five that you like most. b. Plan and conduct a group activity around one of your selected fitness activities.	--Friends --Local park bureau or YMCA brochure --Local fitness centers --PE teacher	4. a. List of ten physical fitness activities with a star by five favorites. b. Conduct the activity for three friends in your program (class).
5. Understand how community resources can be helpful. a. Identify three resources each for two of the activities starred in #4. b. Visit one resource and collect information for you and others to use and for your program's file.	--Local park bureau --Telephone book --YMCA --Fitness centers	5. a. List of two activities with three resources for each. For each resource include name of resource person or place, address, phone number. b. Pamphlets, printed information or references for the file. Also get the person you visit to sign here: Community Resource Person's Signature

ACTIVITY	SUGGESTED RESOURCES	PRODUCTS
6. a. Develop a personal plan for staying fit--including physical activities and diet. b. Stick to your plan for one week and think about what you'll do after this week to make sure your pe,rson continues.	All of the preceding activities and resources.	6. a. Have your written plan OK'd or certified by a community person with expertise in physical fitness. b. Write a paper or have a 15-minute discussion with your counselor about how you feel at the end of the week and about how you plan to maintain your progress. Community Resource Person's Signature

Comments from Participants

Adults seem to enjoy working with youth on a one-to-one basis. These employer comments represent what we hear repeatedly where this project approach and community "certification" of skills is being used.

> "It is very satisfying to me to start these young people on their career and life path."

> "We must spend time and money on potential dropouts when they're young. It will be less costly to society in the long run."

Young people in programs that teach independent living skills in this project format say:

> "We're going out there and really living the outside. We're not being closed in and being told what the outside is like."

> "I never realized how much they (local adults) could help before I really used them as a resource. And now I can go to any adult and say, 'Can you help me with this,' and they will."

How NWREL Can Help ...

We hope you can use the ideas in this paper to develop learning packages for youth. Please remember that you are also a resource, not only to the youth in your program but also to staff of other programs who work with youth with similar needs. Your successes in helping youth become more independent can be of great assistance to others who face the same challenges. The same holds true for successes elsewhere: they can help you.

To expedite this sharing of the wealth, the NWREL Education and Work Program offers to serve as an informal "clearinghouse" for your new products and successful experiences. Our ability to be useful will depend on you; if you send us descriptions of what you're doing and information on how to contact you, we will help you and other programs get in touch with each other, according to your expressed needs. Don't worry about whether your materials are in perfect form; if they are working for you and the youth you serve, they'll probably work for others.

Materials, Organizations, People

As you continue to improve the methods and materials that help youth learn to be self-sufficient and productive, you are not alone. Others can serve as resources to you, but help won't just appear unless you ask for it. Call, write, telephone, meet at conferences, ask students to correspond, and exchange ideas and materials. Other people and programs are seeking similar answers: some have free materials, some have materials for sale, some have ideas to offer and some have questions to ask and perceptions to share.

Listed here are some of the resources available from NWREL; all are current, and all the people listed are ready to be of

assistance and will welcome your comments in return.

Some Materials...

- EXPERIENCE-BASED CAREER EDUCATION (EBCE)

  --Experience-Based Learning: How to Make the Community Your Classroom

  --Student Competencies Guide: Survival Skills for a Changing World

  --The Community Resource Person's Guide for Experience-Based Learning

  --Project Ideabook: Sample Student Projects Using the Community as a Learning Resource

  All can be purchased from NWREL's Office of Marketing, 300 S. W. Sixth Avenue, Portland, OR 97204. Write for a catalog and ordering information.

- LIFEWORKS

  A series of 17 independent learning packages to help adults (and mature youth) cope with day-to-day problems associated with being an independent consumer and a contributing member of the community. Topics include: Housing Needs, Making Change and Budgeting, Using Credit and Understanding Income Taxes, Caring for Your Car, Insurance, Comparison Shopping.

  Available from Gregg/McGraw--28, Attn: J.A. Carusi, Product Manager, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10020

- WOMEN IN NONTRADITIONAL CAREERS (WINC)

  A set of instructional materials that help young women become aware of and consider nontraditional career opportunities as they develop basic career planning skills:

  --WINC Curriculum Guide.
  A nine-unit course about women, work and sex-role stereotyping, including a variety of activities, lesson plans, and resource ideas.

  --WINC Exploration Guide.
  Included in one unit of the Curriculum Guide, this manual helps young women structure and document their learning while independently exploring jobs in the local community.

  --WINC Journal.
  A booklet which integrates fact, humor and instruction with blank journal pages to stimulate young women to write down their feelings about career planning in light of the changing work roles of men and women.

  --VISIONS: Portraits of Women in Nontraditional Careers.
  A series of 14" x 17" black and white posters that highlight photographs and personal comments from women holding jobs such as carpenter, dentist, judge, mechanic, welder, electrician, chemist.

  Available for purchase from NWREL Office of Marketing.

- ADULT CAREER DEVELOPMENT LEARNING PROJECTS

  Currently under development, these are learning projects similar to the example in this IDEAS FOR ACTION. The projects focus on adults who may be entering new work roles for the first time. Topics include: Working Couples; Coping with Stress; Not Working or "What Do I Do with My Free Time?"; Keeping the Job, Now That You've Got It; What Are Nontraditional Careers and What Can They Do For You?

  Contact the NWREL Education and Work Program for information about these projects.

Some Organizations...

- Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
  Education and Work Program
  300 S. W. Sixth Avenue
  Portland, Oregon 97204
  (503) 248-6800
  Andrea Hunter, Youth Coordinator

- National Experience-Based Career Education Association
  c/o Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
  Education and Work Program
  300 S. W. Sixth Avenue
  Portland, Oregon 97204
  (503) 248-6800
  Bob Blum, President

- $(CE)_2$ Program
  Tigard Senior High School
  9000 S.W. Durham Road
  Tigard, Oregon 97223
  (503) 620-1620
  Dede Carr, Director

- Kennewick CE_2 Program
  200 South Dayton
  Kennewick, Washington 99336
  (509) 582-8233
  Les Adams, Director

- CARES
  Pocatello School District #25
  224 S. Arthur
  Pocatello, Idaho 83201
  (208) 233-7100
  Paul Matthews, Director

Some People...

- Rosalind Hamar, Curriculum Specialist
  Education and Work Program
  Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
  300 S. W. Sixth Avenue
  Portland, Oregon 97204
  (503) 248-6800

- Andy Seager
  Northeast Educational Consortium
  RFD
  Bucksport, Maine 04416
  (207) 469-3266

- Jim Seymour, Director
  Mid-Valley Adolescent Center
  1610 Court Street, N.E.
  Salem, Oregon 97301
  (503) 364-9152

- Hal Stoltz, Counselor
  Newberg High School
  Elliott Road
  Newberg, Oregon 97132
  (503) 538-8366

- Wilda Watson-Mincher
  Treatment Director
  Pettygrove House
  1333 N.W. 24th
  Portland, Oregon 97210
  (503) 223-5774

- Louise Wasson
  Educational Service District #121
  1414 S. 200th
  Seattle, Washington 98148
  (206) 242-9400

Editor's Note:

IDEAS FOR ACTION in Education and Work is a new kind of service. The steady growth of interest in education/work programs has generated a wealth of new information, but the sheer mass of this knowledge has hindered practitioners and policymakers from using it to make decisions. We hope this document and the ones to follow will provide information in a usable form.

This is the third issue in the series. Our first issue, Removing Barriers to CETA/School Collaboration, highlights some successful strategies for school staffs and CETA programs to cooperate in the effort to decrease youth unemployment. Our second issue, Improving Learning in the Workplace, describes ways to structure work experiences so they maximize learning benefits. (Both of these issues can be requested through the NWREL Education and Work Program.) This issue, Teaching Independent Living Skills, focuses on ways to help young people become more confident and competent as they enter the world of work.

Ultimately, we hope this series will contribute in a small way to forging bonds among people and programs who want to

solve problems related to transitions between education and work.

We want this series to be vital and adaptive. To accomplish this, we seek interaction with you--the practitioner or policymaker--that goes beyond "letters to the editor." We want to exchange ideas, to report what you are doing and to describe what you see the implications of your efforts to be. The audience for each issue may change, based on the topics, but let us know if you'd like to be part of a permanent mailing list for the series.

IDEAS FOR ACTION is meant to be a useful tool for youth workers and school personnel as well as policymakers. Has it met that goal? We'd like to know! We also want to know if you have any questions or comments about the material presented here. We welcome your suggestions for future issues: topics, tone, format, length--any ways that would make it most useful for you.

Please address your responses to:

Larry McClure, Director
Education and Work Program
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
300 S.W. Sixth Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97204
(503) 248-6800 x 430
or (toll free)
1-800-547-6339 x 430

UPCOMING ISSUE: Volunteering—Pathway to Paid Employment. Available March 1982

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